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STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF EMERGENCY HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES, CONFERENCES AND RELATED QUESTIONS

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991, the General Assembly stated its deep concern about the suffering of the victims of disasters and emergency situations, the loss in human lives, the flow of refugees, the mass displacement of people and the material destruction, and set forth a number of guiding principles and measures to strengthen the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system.

2. Four years later, in its resolution 1995/56 of 28 July 1995, the Economic and Social Council recognized the need to review and strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance, and requested the Secretary-General, in close cooperation with relevant organizations of the United Nations system, to submit, at a date to be determined by the Council at its substantive session of 1996, a comprehensive and analytical report, including options, proposals and recommendations for a review and strengthening of all aspects of the capacity of the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance.

3. The present report provides updates on both the progress achieved thus far in responding to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 and on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 46/182. Section II contains observations on the environment in which humanitarian assistance is likely to be required and provided in the coming years. Section III, on the follow-up to Council resolution 1995/56, provides a brief overview of the substantive discussions on that resolution which have been held by the governing bodies of relevant United Nations organizations, highlighting issues of system-wide concern. As requested in resolution 1995/56, United Nations organizations will include, within their own reports to the Council, a more detailed account of the deliberations of their governing boards. Section III also deals with the role of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in the follow-up process, and summarizes the inter-agency consultations now under way in seven key areas of systemic concern that were identified during inter-agency meetings and through analysis of the discussions in the organizations' governing boards.

4. Section IV reports on the implementation by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of General Assembly resolution 46/182. As appropriate, earlier sections also cover a number of issues pertaining to that resolution. The focus in that section is therefore on activities specific to the Department both in complex emergencies and in natural disasters and environmental emergencies. The report concludes with observations on challenges facing the United Nations humanitarian system and the forthcoming review by the Economic and Social Council of the capacity of the system.

II. THE CONTEXT OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

5. If present trends continue, humanitarian assistance in the coming decade is likely to be provided in an increasingly complex environment - one of internal conflicts and other situations where the international community is called upon to engage in peacemaking, peace-keeping and post-conflict peace-building efforts, to stabilize threatened societies, and to assist in rebuilding war-torn communities. The humanitarian community may also find itself serving more and more as a safety net for fragile societies.

6. To address both the needs of affected peoples and the root causes of disasters and crises, the humanitarian community would benefit from a better understanding of the context in which humanitarian assistance will be provided in the future. Humanitarian organizations will need to determine, in that context, the extent to which they need to act as part of a far broader and more proactive global network. The humanitarian community will have to consider how it will relate in the future to global economic and social adjustments, to environmental and ecological concerns, and to human rights.

7. A more in-depth and elaborate examination of these issues is likely to form part of the comprehensive review requested by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 1995/56. As a first step, this section reviews certain issues that are likely to influence the requirements for humanitarian assistance in the future. These issues in turn suggest the type of humanitarian responsibilities that may be faced in the future, and highlight some important challenges with which the humanitarian community must contend today.

8. Poverty increases vulnerability to both natural disasters and man-made emergencies, and widening economic and social disparities can generate tensions that in turn could lead to conflict. Despite some positive developments - decreases in infant mortality, increases in education, prolonged life expectancy, and rapid economic growth and development in many countries in Asia and Latin America - there are still 1.3 billion people living in poverty and more than 800 million people suffering from hunger in the developing world. 1/ The disparity between the rich and poor is growing: between 1960 and 1991 the share of the world income of countries with the poorest 20 per cent of the world's population fell from 4.9 per cent to 3.6 per cent. 2/

9. If current trends persist, the prospects for many of the least developed countries are discouraging. There is a danger that the poorest and least developed countries will continue to experience little or negative growth, and will become further marginalized from the world economy. 3/ Debt burdens seem likely to continue to cripple the economies of the least developed countries; 4/ already, Africa's external debt burden now equals 83 per cent of the continent's GNP. 5/ Such debt levels frighten away foreign investment and hinder domestic production. Increasingly, official development assistance (ODA) to many countries is targeted for debt repayment rather than development, and the terms of trade for primary commodities are unlikely to improve significantly. 6/

10. Poverty often leads to environmental degradation; and degradation and poverty combined further increase vulnerability. As cultivation is extended to low-lying plains or drought-prone lands, vulnerability to natural disasters

increases. The growing shortages, and worsening quality, of fresh water increases health risks, and deforestation compounds these problems through its acceleration of land and water degradation. In urban areas, it is the poor who most often are forced to live in dense squatter settlements characterized by unsanitary conditions, or near hazardous industrial plants.

11. The future will demonstrate even more clearly that crises and disasters are not aberrant phenomena but, on the contrary, reflections of how the international community and national societies organize themselves and allocate their resources. Poverty not only leaves populations vulnerable to the immediate effects of disaster and conflict, and under-equipped to rebuild their livelihoods, but may undermine the very foundations of society and thus exacerbate the risk of crisis.

12. In some cases, a combination of increasing poverty, deepening social conflicts and weak institutions of governance may threaten the capacity of the State to provide security and basic social services. Rapid urbanization, 7/ often beyond the control of authorities, may contribute to the disintegration of community bonds and social safety nets. Perceived ethnic and other differences may be exploited, and a cycle of hatred and violence initiated.

13. Poverty, increasing vulnerability, and the uncertain evolution of some States will continue to result in acute humanitarian needs. Globalization magnifies the impact of instability and conflict upon international peace and security. No longer can the ramifications of conflict be confined within fixed borders. The former Yugoslavia and the Great Lakes region of Africa are but two examples where refugees, small arms and fighting units crossed borders often enough and in sufficient numbers to threaten the stability of neighbouring States. The financial, political, and security burdens borne by neighbouring States hosting asylum-seekers will continue to be enormous. 8/ Not only the number of asylum-seekers may increase, but also the number of internally displaced, so that there is likely to be an increasing need for humanitarian assistance throughout the world.

14. The changing political and economic environment has diminished the strategic importance of many States in the eyes of donor countries, resulting in the economic and political marginalization of some fragile States. These changing priorities, compounded by demands in donor countries to address domestic requirements, may also have been partially responsible for diminishing ODA, in real terms, over the past few years. 9/ Overall ODA funds have stagnated and, in the case of some large donors, decreased dramatically, despite general acknowledgement that assistance targeted at sustainable and participatory development may help prevent and address the underlying causes of complex crises.

15. At the same time, despite the likelihood of sustained need for humanitarian assistance, the amount of funding available from traditional donor States, having jumped dramatically in the early 1990s, appears to be levelling out and may even be decreasing. In 1995, donor Governments met only 70 per cent of the funds requested in United Nations consolidated appeals for humanitarian emergencies, down from 76 per cent in 1994.

16. Resource mobilization is most successful for the high-profile crises such as Rwanda (92 per cent of the consolidated appeal was funded) or the former Yugoslavia (90 per cent); less is available for protracted complex crises such as those in Afghanistan (33 per cent) and Somalia (30 per cent) (figures are based on appeals launched in 1995). Likewise, funding for essential rehabilitation and reconstruction activities is sometimes scarce because public interest has waned, and rehabilitation requirements fall between the mandates of relief and development for many donors.

17. Also of immediate concern are the significant reductions occurring in the provision of food assistance. Food aid contributions for both development and emergencies have declined dramatically in recent years - cereal contributions dropped from 15 million metric tons in 1992/93 to only 8 million metric tons in 1994/95. 10/ The reasons for this decline include both the scarcity of food surpluses throughout the world (food stocks are nearing an all-time low), in part driven by the liberalization of agricultural trade, and the commensurate increase in food prices (less food can be purchased with the same amount of donated funds), as well as the stagnation in ODA allocations.

18. Internal conflicts, already a noticeable feature of the 1990s, are likely to continue. Although the objectives of armed groups differ, violence is consistently directed against civilians and their means of subsistence. Today, 90 per cent of victims of conflict are non-combatants, mostly women and children. The violence and the targeting of civilians are changing the demands made upon the humanitarian community. Psycho-social rehabilitation for children, rebuilding of destroyed educational facilities, and re-equipping people with the tools necessary to start again are now all necessary components of many humanitarian programmes. Humanitarian assistance alone cannot address the full scope of conflict-related problems - the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance can often depend on adequate arrangements for the protection of affected populations.

19. The humanitarian community will continue to face some of its most serious challenges in conflict settings. The military nature of conflict will often mean that humanitarian assistance will not be perceived as neutral, because humanitarian assistance can be manipulated or diverted to further a warring party's military objectives. The risks and complexities faced by relief workers are intensified by the indiscriminate availability and use of arms and landmines, and by the frequent splintering of warring parties themselves. These issues make negotiations for relief access to affected populations extremely problematic. There is also increasing evidence of violence targeted against humanitarian aid providers.

20. Humanitarian assistance helps victims but can rarely prevent victimization; and it can be provided in a manner that reinforces local capacity and perhaps avoids replicating past inequities. However, humanitarian assistance must be part of an integrated response; it is no substitute for other international activities, political, military or developmental, that address conflict and its root causes.

III. FOLLOW-UP TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1995/56: REVIEW OF UNITED NATIONS CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

21. Ultimately, the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to humanitarian emergencies depends upon how well each United Nations agency works, and works with and complements the other organizations within the system. For the system to attain the capacity to respond as effectively, efficiently and rapidly as is optimal, the sum must be more than its parts. With this in mind, the Economic and Social Council requested both a comprehensive report on the United Nations humanitarian assistance system and reviews by the governing bodies of each constituent part of the United Nations system.

A. Follow-up by United Nations organizations to resolution 1995/56

22. In paragraph 2 (b) of its resolution 1995/56, the Economic and Social Council urged the governing bodies of relevant organizations of the United Nations system to review, during the period from 1995 to 1997, issues concerning the role and operational responsibilities, as well as the operative and financial capacities, of their respective organizations to respond, within their mandates, in the context of broad and comprehensive humanitarian programmes.

23. In response, substantive discussions on Council resolution 1995/56 have been held during 1996 in the Executive Boards and Committees of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The resolution was reported to the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in October 1995, with FAO follow-up to be considered at the next FAO Council session in October 1996. In all cases, the relevant organizations have informed their boards of the process they propose to follow in addressing the issues raised in the resolution, and have affirmed their commitment to the process established by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for ensuring an overall coherent response to the resolution. Member States have welcomed the response of agencies and generally encouraged them to continue their participation in the Inter-Agency Task Force led by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs on follow-up to the Council resolution.

24. As was foreseen in the Council's resolution, conclusions on the issues raised therein are not necessarily anticipated in 1996, and therefore discussions of some aspects have been of a preliminary nature. For instance, UNICEF is undergoing a fundamental review of its emergency role, both strategic and operational proposals being put to its Board in 1996 and 1997. Nevertheless, it is already apparent that the identification of seven key systemic issues by the Inter-Agency Task Force (see sect. III.C) relates very precisely to the concerns of organizations and Member States in their governing boards.

25. Three issues have attracted particular attention and debate. The first concerns the links between relief operations and rehabilitation and development

activities. In a UNICEF document on emergency operations, submitted to its Executive Board in January 1996, attention was drawn to the particular contribution UNICEF could make to emergency operations given its strength in the development process and its continuing field presence. This was noted and welcomed by Executive Board members, and UNICEF will address further the linkage between relief and development in a forthcoming paper for its Executive Board. UNICEF is strongly committed to the idea that capacity-building is essential at all stages of an emergency, even at the initial "survival" stage.

26. The focus of debate in the Standing Committee of UNHCR in April was on the Office's role in countries of origin, particular attention being paid to the need to strengthen links with development organizations, including the Bretton Woods institutions. UNHCR also highlighted to the Committee the continuing importance of its Quick Impact Projects.

27. The relationship between relief and development activities has for some time been recognized as one which is not necessarily sequential. Relief and development activities proceed often at the same time, each therefore having an impact upon the other. Recognition of the limitations of the paradigm of a linear continuum was reflected in recent debates in governing boards and this recognition has given rise to the need to review the funding arrangements for relief and development activities, to ensure that there is clarity on the respective roles of consolidated appeals, round tables and consultative groups. This question is being addressed by the Working Group of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and by the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions of the Administrative Committee on Coordination. The Standing Committee has also decided to examine possible modalities for associating the World Bank with its work.

28. The United Nations Development Programme, in recognition of the need for improved links between relief and development activities, has proposed a number of approaches in papers presented to its Executive Board in May 1996. These include operational guidelines for the use of funds for successor programming arrangements and, in particular, for the use of funds for countries in special development circumstances. These guidelines provide the framework for the utilization of UNDP core funds to provide support, in collaboration with relevant partners, to development efforts in response to crisis, including activities of a preventative and curative nature, and to contribute to meeting the immediate needs of countries experiencing sudden-onset disasters and emergencies. At the same time, the guidelines provide for a contribution of UNDP to the formulation of a strategic framework for international and national action, providing for a holistic approach to the recovery needs of countries facing crisis. The details of implementation of these new arrangements have yet to be worked out and discussion with members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, for example, will need to take place to ensure an accountable and clear relationship between relief and development organizations. An analysis of these arrangements will be carried out in time for the report to the Economic and Social Council in 1997.

29. The UNDP Executive Board also discussed the role of United Nations Volunteers (UNV) in tackling root causes of conflict and encouraged UNV to

intensify participation in the full spectrum of development, humanitarian and peace activities of the United Nations system and its related organizations.

30. The second major issue is the provision of assistance and protection to internally displaced persons. This is a subject of reference in all papers presented to governing boards, with a consensus that much remains to be done to clarify external institutional responsibilities, within the context of the sovereign Government's capacity to respond to these needs. UNHCR has restated its willingness to respond to requests from the Secretary-General to provide assistance. While some members of its Executive Committee would like UNHCR to play a more active role regarding internally displaced persons, other members have taken a cautious line, urging UNHCR not to extend itself beyond its "ceiling of effectiveness", a point accepted by UNHCR. WFP has proposed that the Emergency Relief Coordinator, in consultation with members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, might consider, in specific circumstances, the designation of a "lead operational agency" for these responsibilities. UNDP has stated that it sees its role as providing assistance in the prevention and resettlement phases; the UNDP Governing Council has urged UNDP, jointly with UNHCR, to carry out activities related to providing development assistance to displaced populations. The responsibilities of UNICEF for assistance and protection to internally displaced persons are being elaborated and will inevitably draw on the fact that most internally displaced persons are women and children.

31. Within the United Nations system, the Emergency Relief Coordinator is the entry point for this matter. To assist the Coordinator in discharging these responsibilities an Inter-Agency Task Force on internally displaced persons was established in 1995. The work of this Task Force has now been formally linked by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 as the forum for inter-agency consultations on this key systemic issue. It is anticipated that the Standing Committee will be able to submit its recommendations to the Council on the division of responsibilities, among United Nations organizations, for addressing both assistance to and the protection needs of internally displaced persons.

32. The third major issue is coordination in complex emergencies. This is one of the seven systemic issues identified by the Inter-Agency Task Force in the follow-up to Council resolution 1995/56. Governing bodies placed strong emphasis on the need for agencies to support the central coordination role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. In January 1996, the Standing Committee of UNHCR confirmed its view that coordination at the field level in complex emergencies could best be managed through the designation of a lead agency by the Emergency Relief Coordinator in consultation with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. This aspect of coordination is to be addressed, with more detailed analysis, in inter-agency consultations.

33. A second aspect of coordination in complex emergencies which has received some attention is the necessity of operational "predictability" within the United Nations humanitarian system. For instance, were WFP to take on a larger logistics role in the transport of non-food items, it would have to be clear that these services would be dependably provided in any complex emergency even if circumstances did not require a major WFP presence for food provision.

Similarly, UNICEF's mandate gives it an obligation to provide assistance and protection for women and children, and this responsibility is reflected in the paper it submitted in January to its Executive Board. The specific responsibilities of UNICEF for needs assessment and the rehabilitation of essential social service networks, as well as for advocacy on child issues, must be further defined in operational contexts with its partners, to ensure efficient complementarity. "Predictability" was also raised at the January meeting of the Standing Committee of UNHCR.

34. It is within the framework of memoranda of understanding that the question of predictability will be resolved, as it is in such documents that accountability for services will be identified, and the respective roles and responsibilities of relief and development actors delineated. Agencies continue to progress in the development of memoranda of understanding - an issue also raised in Council resolution 1995/56. A memorandum of understanding has been signed between UNICEF and UNHCR. Work is in progress on similar arrangements between UNICEF and, respectively, WFP, WHO and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Cooperative arrangements are under discussion between UNHCR and, respectively, the World Bank, UNDP and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as well as between WFP and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and between ICRC and UNICEF. UNHCR, in addition to its memorandum of understanding with WFP (signed in 1991), has signed memoranda with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Memoranda of understanding with non-governmental organizations are also being developed: UNICEF is developing a generic format, while WFP has signed (in 1995) a first memorandum with Catholic Relief Services. Finally, the importance of the link between relief and development agencies argues strongly the case for the elaboration of memoranda of understanding between UNDP and other organizations of the United Nations system, and this is being pursued by UNDP. Clearly, with this large number of memoranda of understanding being elaborated and already signed it is important to ensure that bilateral memoranda add up to a coherent humanitarian response system.

35. A third aspect of coordination has been the establishment of stand-by arrangements with external assets to provide for increased emergency response at times of special need. In addition to the recent strengthening of its emergency response capacities, UNHCR has developed a programme of "service packages" which was referred to in its Standing Committee in January 1996. These packages are contractual arrangements between UNHCR and Governments which have, principally, military and civil defence assets which could be called on at times when the emergency response capacity of UNHCR requires reinforcement. Likewise, WFP has developed eight logistics service packages. In addition, UNICEF is in the process of developing similar arrangements to supplement its recently created Rapid Response Team and its improved emergency stockpile. To ensure that the use of these external assets is managed in the most effective manner, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has established a Military and Civil Defence Unit as a service to agencies, donors of assets, and recipient Governments (see sect. IV.A). The Department and UNV have also undertaken to develop the White Helmets Initiative, which aims to encourage the use of newly created national volunteer corps to support relief and recovery efforts. Pilot UNV/White Helmets

Initiative projects are already being tried in several countries, such as Haiti, Lebanon and Rwanda.

36. In the context of the ongoing efforts by United Nations organizations to strengthen capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies, Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 is having a considerable impact on the way in which organizations and bodies plan their response to emergency operations, and this is reflected in the attention paid to the resolution in the deliberations of governing boards. Arrangements have been put into place to follow up on the issues raised in the resolution, with a view to submitting comprehensive reports to the Council in 1997. In all cases, the agencies, organizations, programmes and funds of the United Nations system are approaching the issues raised in a manner which provides for effective debate at the level of governing boards and with a view to submitting views and recommendations to the Council for the review of the capacity of the system. Key systemic issues have been identified and are being addressed in a collaborative manner by the relevant organizations, and governing boards are being kept informed about the links between their debates and those taking place in other forums.

B. Role of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee

37. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee and its Working Group have served as a key tool for inter-agency coordination on a variety of pressing humanitarian issues, including the follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56. In 1995, the inter-agency mechanism provided a forum for agencies to coordinate work on specific emergency operations, and to develop common system-wide positions on landmine issues and on the utilization of military and civil defence assets for humanitarian assistance. In the first half of 1996, the Standing Committee addressed the follow-up to the multi-donor evaluation study on Rwanda, the humanitarian impact of sanctions, the consolidated appeals process and resource mobilization.

38. The Standing Committee and its Working Group act as a clearing-house for all work undertaken as follow-up to Council resolution 1995/56. This approach encourages consistency in the dialogues between agencies, their governing bodies, and Member States, as well as on the measures being taken to address issues raised in the resolution.

39. In its resolution 1995/56, the Council requested the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to convene regular, informal and open information meetings with Member States, observer States and relevant intergovernmental and other organizations on the review of the issues so as to ensure that they are coherently addressed and appropriately reflected in the report of the Secretary-General. To fulfil this request, the Department has briefed Member States on the follow-up to the resolution and solicited their comments and observations.

C. Capacity restraints and limitations of the United Nations humanitarian system

40. Deliberations during the inter-agency sessions on the follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 focused primarily on ensuring a coherent and coordinated approach. Through inter-agency discussions and a review of agency deliberations, seven key issues of a systemic nature which would benefit from further inter-agency consultations were identified: coordination, resource mobilization, relief and development, staff development, monitoring and evaluation, strengthening local capacity and coping mechanisms, and internally displaced persons.

41. Members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee concluded that the task of reviewing these issues and recommending improved practices and methods would best be further pursued in a series of informal consultations. Proposals emanating from these consultations will be submitted to the Standing Committee or its Working Group with a view to making recommendations to the Economic and Social Council in 1997. The following section presents the parameters of debate and discussion in each of the substantive areas. In six of seven areas an inter-agency sub-working group has been formed to facilitate inter-agency consultations.

1. Coordination

42. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs is the entity within the United Nations whose main purpose is to ensure timely, coherent and coordinated humanitarian responses by the international community to disasters and complex crises. It is particularly charged with ensuring the effective coordination of United Nations humanitarian assistance, and acting as a facilitator with respect to international organizations and non-governmental organizations. The tools created to promote coordination, such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, the consolidated appeals process, the complex emergency training initiative, the disaster management training programme and the secondment of personnel to other United Nations bodies, have improved significantly, but a number of issues remain to be addressed to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of coordination.

43. An inter-agency sub-working group on coordination will review the current situation regarding options for field coordination. The sub-working group will examine a number of distinct examples of existing field coordination mechanisms, and identify what lessons can be learned for improved practice in different emergency settings. From these lessons it is anticipated that principles and criteria which should be the underlying objectives of the exercise of coordination will become clear: principles such as impartiality, neutrality, transparency and accountability, and criteria such as responsiveness, programme integrity, adaptability and flexibility. In turn, these standards would be used to provide a more rational basis for the establishment of coordination mechanisms appropriate for each unique emergency situation.

44. With these principles as a basis, a number of issues will be addressed. Appropriate coordination mechanisms during and between different phases of

complex emergencies (relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction, development) must be defined. Definition of the scope and form of coordination mechanisms appropriate in demobilization, reintegration and mine action programmes will be undertaken. The identification of the multiple actors (United Nations, bilaterals, multilaterals, donors, non-governmental organizations, government authorities, beneficiaries, etc.) and multiple levels (international, regional, national, local) engaged in humanitarian assistance response and the appropriate coordination mechanisms for these complex interactions will be addressed. In addition, the refinement of previously established coordination tools and decision-making processes and procedures at the Headquarters, regional and in-country levels will continue.

2. Resource mobilization

45. Against a backdrop of a growing number of emergencies, escalating relief requirements and scarce donor resources, there is an urgent need to ensure that effective and coordinated mechanisms for the mobilization of resources are in place and that there is enhanced accountability in the utilization of contributions received. The sub-working group on resource mobilization has been established to facilitate inter-agency consultations on key areas where systemic limitations or variations in capacity may exist.

46. At the meeting of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in April 1996, seven priority areas were identified for consideration by the sub-working group on resource mobilization. These include the process for prioritization of funding requirements, the utilization of "flash appeals" to ensure timely response to critical first phase emergency needs, the relationship among various funding mechanisms, and ways to enhance advocacy and public information strategies with a focus on the resources necessary for the provision of humanitarian assistance.

47. In its review of the relationship of existing resource mobilization mechanisms such as the consolidated appeal, the round table and consultative groups, the sub-working group should consider how best to ensure an effective resource mobilization strategy for the range of relief, recovery and rehabilitation activities essential to the provision of emergency and post-conflict assistance. These issues will be reviewed in close collaboration with the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions which is currently examining the key elements and resource implications of a post-conflict recovery strategy and framework.

48. The sub-working group will consider current procedures for reporting on programme implementation and financial requirements. It will formulate recommendations on how to strengthen monitoring, analysis and provision of information on achievements and difficulties experienced, drawing particular attention to strategic funding shortfalls which may limit the implementation or effectiveness of priority activities. Another area for consideration is how to enhance the availability of information on global humanitarian assistance being provided by the international community, through both United Nations and non-United Nations channels. The sub-working group will prepare recommendations on how better to reflect the value of assistance provided through bilateral, non-governmental and other organizations, the costing of military and civil

defence assets in support of humanitarian operations and the value of service packages.

3. Relief and development

49. Increasing emphasis is being placed on ways in which, in the immediate aftermath of humanitarian and political crises, post-conflict recovery programmes that link relief and development can support peace processes by addressing the immediate needs of conflict-affected societies. At the same time, there are situations, though not conflict induced, where extensive humanitarian assistance is required while at the same time there is a vital need to pursue development.

50. Significant efforts are being made, by the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the Standing Committee among others, to establish closer working relations between the Bretton Woods institutions and other humanitarian and development agencies within the United Nations system. In addition, increased integration of relief and development activities requires the donor community to suggest ways in which the normally highly compartmentalized funds for relief and development can themselves be linked.

4. Staff development

51. In the area of human resource development, many agencies recognize the need for a broader human resources management policy and strategy. Renewed impetus is given to staff development in view of its crucial role in achieving the organization's objectives. There is general recognition of the need for the development of management capacities, and strategic thinking as an essential tool of managerial capacity.

52. In the humanitarian field, a human resources development strategy requires a package of interconnected measures including training. The United Nations staff involved in humanitarian activities are compelled to strengthen their capacity to deal with a constantly changing environment. Specific agencies generally have staff development programmes reflecting agency priorities and a specific organizational perspective. There is however also a critical need for a more cohesive approach to human resource development, in general, and training at the United Nations system level, in particular, in order to improve collective performance.

53. The sub-working group on staff development took into account work related to human resource development currently under way in the Administrative Committee on Coordination and in other inter-agency forums. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP are jointly managing the disaster management training programme. In addition, the United Nations Staff College is being launched at the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization at Turin, and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is facilitating the complex emergency training initiative. In the light of these ongoing programmes, the sub-working group is now identifying non-training issues related to staff development.

5. Monitoring and evaluation

54. The need to improve the effectiveness, transparency and accountability, to victims and donors, of emergency relief operations has been widely recognized by Governments and relief agencies. Member States are increasingly concerned with issues related to cost-effectiveness and the impact of humanitarian assistance, as evidenced by the recent multi-donor study on Rwanda.

55. The United Nations humanitarian agencies have well-established monitoring and evaluation units which provide recommendations and feedback aimed at improving the quality of their activities. Such activities however tend to be agency-specific and little effort so far has gone into joint or inter-agency monitoring or evaluation mechanisms which could examine the interface between agency-specific activities and the overall direction of a multi-agency humanitarian programme. The consequence is that coherent coordination of the programme, and accountability, is more difficult.

56. The sub-working group on monitoring and evaluation has agreed that a first priority is to study one or more large-scale humanitarian programmes in order to recommend a practical system for the monitoring of overall United Nations humanitarian assistance in emergency situations. Such recommendations would build on existing agency-specific monitoring activities, and identify a simple and practical system for monitoring those aspects of a multi-agency humanitarian programme that are relevant to its overall coordination and direction. Subsequently, work will be initiated on the development of joint evaluation methodologies and procedures, taking into account existing United Nations concepts and practices, and in close consultation with the different United Nations committees working on the issue of monitoring and evaluation guidelines, such as Joint Consultative Group on Policy and the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions.

6. Strengthening local capacity and coping mechanisms

57. Complex crises tend to have structural and deep-rooted causes which have inhibited or undermined the ability of different groups to participate fully in the socio-economic and political development of their society. Those who are most vulnerable to crises are almost invariably those who are already marginalized and least able to shape events which impact on their ability to survive. Crises are self-evidently destructive in human and financial terms. They exact a heavy toll on physical infrastructure, natural assets, and people's ability to maintain their usual means of livelihood. Crises also tend to inflict serious damage on the social fabric which binds societies together.

58. It is increasingly clear that a major determinant in the overall effectiveness of humanitarian action is the extent to which it either strengthens or erodes the inherent capacity and coping mechanisms of affected communities. Building indigenous institutional capacity to respond to relief requirements is not sufficient; there also needs to be a thorough understanding of the overall capacities and coping mechanisms of the communities in need of assistance and the larger factors which shape their environment.

59. Some progress has been made in developing tools and procedures to identify those who are most vulnerable, to assess the needs, and to define strategies which strengthen the resources of communities threatened by crisis. For instance, WFP has initiated a programme to strengthen local capacities for disaster mitigation, which includes field-level vulnerability analyses. None the less, in many settings, particularly in large-scale, sudden and fast-paced population movements, humanitarian agencies face major challenges in ensuring that their activities do not undermine capacities or generate dependency.

60. After preliminary consultations, the sub-working group on local capacity and coping mechanisms will commence a review of the concepts, operational definitions and current practices throughout the different phases of a crisis. Once this has been completed, the most appropriate means of assessing the impact of humanitarian action on local capacity and coping mechanisms will be determined. On the basis of these findings, the sub-working group will examine the extent to which the different approaches add up to a coherent strategy necessary to reinforce capacity and coping mechanisms in a meaningful and integrated fashion, and then will identify additional effective practices and procedures.

7. Internally displaced persons

61. Concerns about how the system as a whole addresses internally displaced persons in terms of assistance and protection are being reviewed by the Inter-Agency Task Force on internally displaced persons which was created to support the Emergency Relief Coordinator in his/her role as reference point on the question within the United Nations. There is a clear need for additional definition of the institutional responsibilities of agencies within the United Nations system. UNHCR, despite having considerable activities for internally displaced persons, relates to these populations as an extension of its general mandate and not as a population group of specific mandated concern. UNICEF and WFP act in response to their respective mandates on women and children and food provision, whenever and wherever people are vulnerable, whether they be refugees, displaced or resident populations.

62. Additional clarity is needed regarding the activities of individual United Nations organizations vis-à-vis other United Nations and non-United Nations humanitarian agencies, and within the context of the capacity of the sovereign Government to respond to the needs of internally displaced persons. In a humanitarian emergency, the specific assistance and protection needs of those persons, and the ability of the international community to address them, are often quite distinct from those of refugees, returnees, or even needy residents. As the humanitarian emergency phase winds down and reintegration becomes a possibility, there are also special requirements, both normative and substantive, for addressing the needs of internally displaced persons. In the coming year, the Task Force will draw attention both to the medium-term and long-term policy issues, and to the review of operational arrangements related to country-specific situations of displacement.

IV. DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS: IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 46/182

63. Since its creation in 1992 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat has grown into an effective facilitator for the coordination of both natural and complex emergencies, and has increased its capacity to act as an advocate of humanitarian assistance in the context of both political and humanitarian policy discussions, and with respect to resource mobilization for humanitarian emergencies.

64. During the past year, the Department underwent an internal strategic planning exercise followed by an independent management study to identify both its core activities and its appropriate level of resources, and to assess its effectiveness. The management study confirmed that the Department is a dynamic, responsive and reflective institution but acknowledged that its ultimate success will depend largely on the support of Member States and other organizations within the United Nations system. The management study did identify a few areas for improvement, including greater emphasis on policy and evaluation, improved collection, analysis and dissemination of information, better administrative procedures, and a need for staff development and training programmes. Since then the Department has taken a number of actions to address identified problems, including administrative and departmental adjustments to bring about greater synergy between the work of the New York and Geneva offices, and greater utilization of common services for both complex emergencies and natural disasters.

65. It was recognized in the 1995 report to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly that the limited regular budget funding available to the Department posed significant constraints on its capacity to coordinate an accelerated incidence of complex emergencies. On the basis of the internal and external reviews and studies referred to above, a financial strategy for addressing the Department's extrabudgetary requirements has been established. With appropriate donor support, this strategy could place the Department on a sound financial footing and ensure predictable resources to carry out its work in the longer term.

A. Coordination tools

66. By its resolution 46/182, the General Assembly created the post of Emergency Relief Coordinator, and a number of tools for use by that official in fulfilling the coordination mandate, such as the Central Emergency Revolving Fund and the consolidated inter-agency appeal process. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs continues to hone these tools to ensure their effectiveness and their appropriateness in a time of changing demands and operational realities. The Department has also developed a number of additional tools, instruments evolved to meet new needs and new environments, such as an information-sharing system on the Internet, and the use of military and civilian assets.

1. Central Emergency Revolving Fund

67. The Central Emergency Revolving Fund continues to serve as one of the main sources of funding for United Nations agencies in need of a timely response to emergencies. During 1995, the Fund was utilized to supplement the agencies' own funding for emergencies in Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda and the Great Lakes region. Details of advances made to and reimbursements received from operational agencies as well as the status of the Fund are given in the annex. While the Fund's usefulness is well acknowledged, certain concerns and constraints remain to be addressed in order to ensure its continued effectiveness.

68. As reported to the Council and the General Assembly in 1995, the Fund has been utilized, on a limited number of occasions, for protracted emergencies in order to avert critical interruption or scaling down of much-needed humanitarian relief activities. Since the Fund was established primarily to ensure a timely response in the initial phase of an emergency, the Council may wish to review this matter and formally authorize, in compelling circumstances, the use of the Fund to fulfil the critical humanitarian requirements of protracted emergencies.

69. One other concern is the need for timely replenishment of the Fund. Delayed reimbursements have had a serious impact on the Fund's ability to meet requirements in emergency situations. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has taken steps to reinforce existing procedures, including shortening the period for reimbursement or encouraging partial repayment wherever feasible and drawing late reimbursements to the attention of donors in consolidated appeals. The Department has also invoked the relevant provisions of the guidelines governing the Fund's operation related to the recovery of delayed reimbursements.

70. Despite these initiatives, however, a number of advances have remained outstanding for more than one to two years owing to weak responses to certain appeals. This matter has been drawn to the attention of the Council and the General Assembly. One of the affected agencies has noted that, as a result of its inability to reimburse, it will not be borrowing from the Fund in the future, except when it has secured pledges; this weakens the concept of the borrowing facility. The only remaining alternative for recovery of these advances would be to seek specific donor contributions to cover the outstanding advances so that the Fund's level of resources can be maintained at the minimum of $50 million stipulated in General Assembly resolution 46/182.

71. In the context of its review of the humanitarian capacity of the United Nations as set out in its resolution 1995/56, the Economic and Social Council may also wish to address the overall issue of strengthening the Fund, expanding its scope and broadening its resource base so as to make it an even more effective instrument for emergency response.

2. Early warning

72. Recognizing that prevention and preparedness is the most effective way to reduce conflict-induced human suffering, work has continued on developing an early-warning system within the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. The purpose

of the Humanitarian Early Warning System is to compile and analyse information from several varied sources so as to identify potential crises that may have humanitarian implications. The System draws upon the various early-warning mechanisms of other United Nations and non-United Nations organizations, and by collaborating with non-governmental organizations as sources of information and partners in assessing situations. With the information provided by the System, the Department is able to focus attention on situations of concern in discussions with humanitarian partners, including United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, and with other departments of the United Nations Secretariat, in particular the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations, through the "framework for coordination".

73. The next step in strengthening the Humanitarian Early Warning System is the development of a strong, effective and regular channel of communication with field offices and regional information systems such as the Department's Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), maintained at Nairobi, as well as with regional organizations such as the Organization of African Unity, which itself has recently established an early-warning system for conflict situations in Africa.

3. ReliefWeb

74. When a crisis occurs, information disjunctures and information overload can be major obstacles in the effective coordination of international humanitarian assistance. Recognizing the need for better information management, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, in cooperation with interested Governments and United Nations and non-governmental organizations, has established an interconnected, global information network known as "ReliefWeb".

75. The information on ReliefWeb, in the form of situation reports, appeals, evaluations, news reports, maps, financial tracking and country information from the Humanitarian Early Warning System, is produced by the international humanitarian community and maintained by the Department. ReliefWeb consolidates and organizes this information on emergencies and disasters, and ensures that it is current, easily retrievable, and readily accessible on the Internet. Where the Internet is not available, information from ReliefWeb can be disseminated using e-mail or CD-ROM.

4. Use of military and civil defence assets

76. Military and civil defence assets, used in the past with some regularity in response to natural disasters, have now been recognized as having a useful potential role in response to complex crises as well, particularly in the case of sudden-onset emergencies. In accordance with a decision taken by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs established the Military and Civil Defence Unit, which reports to an Advisory Panel established by the Standing Committee. The Unit aims to facilitate timely, sufficient and cost-effective support by military and civil defence assets to concerned humanitarian agencies when requested. It will act as a

focal point for Governments, regional organizations and military and civil defence institutions interested in planning and, when requested, providing support to agencies engaged in humanitarian operations. The Unit will support the establishment of preparedness and response measures, the development of planning tools (databases, manuals), the definition of a legal framework for the use of military and civil defence assets, and the preparation and implementation of training exercises.

77. Prior to the establishment of the Military and Civil Defence Unit, the Department's Military and Civil Defence Assets project finalized, with the cooperation of representatives of 30 countries, a Military and Civil Defence Assets Field Manual which defines pre-planning and crisis management options. In addition, a reference document for coordination of humanitarian air operations was prepared by a Military and Civil Defence Assets working group, and the first set of Military and Civil Defence Assets training modules was finalized. The products of these activities have been taken up by the Governments participating in the Partnership for Peace programme, and applied in emergencies such as those in Cape Verde, Rwanda and Ukraine. The Military and Civil Defence Assets project and the Military and Civil Defence Unit will be merged into a single unit.

B. Response to complex emergencies

78. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has continued to develop its capacity to respond to ongoing and incipient complex emergencies. As well as developing ongoing training programmes including the complex emergency training initiative mentioned above, this has been achieved inter alia through the inter-agency consolidated appeals and related processes, and the consolidation of headquarters and field structures.

79. The consolidated inter-agency appeals process remains a central tool in coordinating the response of humanitarian partners to complex emergencies. Since September 1995, some US$ 2.5 billion has been requested in 12 appeals, and a total of $795 million has been pledged to date or carried over. Some 25 million people have been targeted to receive assistance through the appeals covering Afghanistan, Angola, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iraq, Lebanon, Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Sudan and the former Yugoslavia, and the Caucasus region, the Chechnya region of the Russian Federation and the Great Lakes region. In addition, the importance of flash appeals has yet again been confirmed in 1996, as illustrated by the flash appeal for internally displaced persons made on 19 April 1996 as a result of the emergency in Lebanon, the response to which was well in excess of the funding requirements.

80. The response of the Department to complex emergencies has also been strengthened by the continued rapid deployment of departmental missions, often with the active participation of other United Nations bodies. These missions have been fundamental, first, in drawing the attention of the international community to the plight of affected populations and, secondly, in assessing the needs of vulnerable groups for the subsequent planning, elaboration and implementation of humanitarian programmes. In each case, the subsequent evaluation has been linked to the process of defining the most appropriate

strategy for resource mobilization, be it through detailed situation reports, flash appeals or consolidated inter-agency appeals.

81. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has also continued a process of mid-term review of a number of humanitarian programmes, whereby the achievements and constraints of ongoing programmes have been identified and reviewed. This tool has been valuable to all humanitarian partners, and has contributed to improving the response of the Department to ongoing and incipient complex emergencies.

82. In the context of ongoing complex emergencies, 14 field structures are currently staffed by the Department in Afghanistan, Angola, Iraq, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and the Sudan, and the Caucasus region (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia), the Chechnya region of the Russian Federation and the Great Lakes region (Burundi, Rwanda and the IRIN office at Nairobi). In addition, an office of the Department was deployed to Sarajevo, to support the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The Department's Field Coordination Unit in Tajikistan was closed at the end of 1995, as that country moved towards continued rehabilitation and restructuring.

83. The Department's Field Coordination Units provide support for the coordination functions performed by the humanitarian coordinator in the field, including promotion of sectoral coordination and implementation of humanitarian strategies which are agreed upon by all humanitarian agencies in the country. The fundamental role of the units is performed through information sharing, defining common strategies to address ongoing humanitarian requirements, promoting joint needs assessments, assisting agencies in identifying specific roles, and avoiding overlap and duplication.

C. Natural disasters and environmental emergencies

84. A critical component of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 46/182 by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is work related to the reduction and mitigation of, and the response to, natural disasters and environmental emergencies. Such disasters continue to cause great suffering and vast material loss throughout the world, especially in developing countries.

1. Reduction and mitigation activities

85. During the reporting period, the Department has continued its efforts towards integrated and concerted approaches in the field of natural disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation. These efforts have been undertaken on the basis of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction of May 1994. The work of the Department includes technical cooperation in support of concrete application of natural disaster reduction at the country level.

86. The secretariat for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction has continued to support and coordinate the implementation of the Decade's

targets and its overall objective of reducing, through concerted international action, the loss of life, material destruction, and social and economic disruption which occur as a consequence of natural disasters. Particular consideration and support is extended to the needs of the most vulnerable communities, mostly in the developing world. Major challenges in implementing the goals of the Decade relate to the creation of constructive linkages between natural disaster reduction, natural resource protection, environmental management, and the achievement of sustainable development. Pursuant to the request of the General Assembly, a detailed report on the implementation of the International Framework of Action for the Decade is being submitted in 1996 under the item entitled "Environment and sustainable development".

87. The broad strategy for pre-disaster activities has been established through consultation with country authorities and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. However, a continuing problem is the lack of sustained commitment and systematic attention to risk reduction. Each new catastrophe typically triggers closer attention to mitigation measures, at least for the disaster type in question, but such attention is often localized and short-lived and, as a result, the global socio-economic impact of disasters, measured in terms of the number of people affected by disaster, has continued to increase by about 6 per cent per year.

88. The only way to stop this increase, and its dramatic impact on sustainable development and environmental degradation, is to initiate long-term mitigation programmes. It is also increasingly recognized by disaster-prone country authorities and by many donors that a larger proportion of international assistance should be focused on addressing the root causes of disaster, through suitably adapted prevention and preparedness programmes which maximize the mobilization of national and especially local community resources, drawing upon the skills and expertise of all relevant regional and international agencies.

89. Over the past year, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, in close coordination with other United Nations bodies, has provided assistance to help countries to properly assess their full spectrum of risks, to prescribe, on the basis of global experience, the most cost-effective disaster reduction measures, to coordinate external guidance where needed on how to apply those measures in the most vulnerable areas, and to stimulate wider involvement and closer cooperation among the numerous international agencies with relevant technical and managerial expertise. A wide range of integrated and systematic disaster reduction programmes are being carried out in some of the disaster-prone developing countries.

2. Natural disaster and environmental emergency response

90. In 1995, the Department provided assistance to 55 Member States to support their efforts to cope with the impact of 82 sudden-onset natural disasters and environmental emergencies. The Department's emergency response system assisted in on-site assessment, coordination at the local, national and international levels, and resource mobilization. In 28 cases, disaster-affected countries requested the Department to launch appeals for international assistance on their behalf, and the international community made $103 million worth of contributions

in cash, kind and services. In response to these appeals $7 million were channelled through the Department to address the most pressing needs of disaster victims.

91. In addition to facilitating mobilization and coordination of international relief to assist affected countries to cope with the aftermath of disasters, the Department continued its activities in substantive areas of capacity-building for improved international, regional and national disaster preparedness.

92. Cooperation in the procurement, storage and delivery of relief items on a cost-sharing basis and, in particular, the joint operation of emergency stockpiles was fostered further. The implementation of memoranda of understanding on the cooperative use of the Pisa warehouse with WHO and WFP commenced in 1995 and increased the speed and capacity of the Pisa warehouse response to emergencies. During the last three years, in cooperation with 15 partners, over 2,700 tons of relief goods, valued at approximately $11.5 million, were delivered to some 57 destinations.

93. The United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team, through the participation of 18 Member States, continued to contribute to greater transparency and effectiveness in the Department's assessment and coordination activities in the context of sudden-onset disasters. To further develop its capacity to respond to coordination requirements, the Department in 1995 organized two training courses and a refresher training course in disaster assessment and coordination.

94. The training was based on the material and the wider emergency management framework established by the joint Department of Humanitarian Affairs/UNDP disaster management training programme. That programme is engaged in developing and implementing training and other staff development activities for the capacitation of Department of Humanitarian Affairs staff and representatives in the area of field coordination of emergency response. As the training addressed the full range of emergency situations included in the Department's mandate, it represents a practical contribution of the Department to the newly established inter-agency complex emergency training initiative.

95. The joint UNEP/Department of Humanitarian Affairs Environment Unit assisted many countries in responding to a variety of environmental emergencies by acting as a broker between affected and donating countries, and as a clearing-house and switchboard for disaster notification and alert. Similarly, the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group continued to promote and strengthen a network of contacts between providers of resources and the Department.

96. The Department regularly convenes the Working Group on Emergency Telecommunications. 11/ The definition of a coordination mechanism for the field telecommunication networks used by United Nations agencies and other partners during emergencies will be implemented in the summer of 1996. At the same time, a consolidated approach towards a reduction of communications fees will be adopted, which is expected to result in considerable savings. The preparation of a draft international convention for the facilitation of emergency telecommunications for humanitarian aid will be reviewed, starting in May 1996.

97. A model agreement between the United Nations and the Government of a Member State, concerning measures to expedite the import, export and transit of relief consignments and possessions of relief personnel in the event of disasters, was prepared in cooperation with the secretariat of the World Customs Organization (WCO) and in consultation with interested United Nations agencies, relief organizations and national customs authorities. The final text of the Model Agreement was submitted for approval to WCO in March 1996.

3. Sasakawa/Department of Humanitarian Affairs Disaster Prevention Award

98. In 1986, as part of a series of measures designed to give more publicity to the disaster prevention activities which have always been part of the mandate of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and its predecessor, the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator, an annual disaster prevention award was created with financial support from the Sasakawa Foundation. This was one of several similar prizes established to promote some of the essential but less widely known activities of different international organizations. The Award has been given annually from 1987 to 1994, and has considerably stimulated the applicants (typically between 15 and 20 each year) to take stock of the extent to which they have oriented their skills and activities to meet practical needs in the more disaster-prone developing countries.

99. Because of increasing administrative costs and decreasing revenue as a result of global interest rate reductions, it has become necessary to seek additional capital as a basis for the annual Award. In response to the Department's request, the Sasakawa Foundation has indicated its readiness to double its original contribution, thereby providing a new total of $2 million.

100. The original agreement and statutes have been revised and expanded to include, in particular, clarification of the purpose of the Award and the criteria for application and for selection of each year's recipient, and rules concerning membership of the jury and the procedure by which it selects the winning applicant. The new agreement has been developed after consultation between the Sasakawa Foundation and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and has been reviewed by the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat and modified in line with advice received.

101. The General Assembly is invited to take note of these arrangements and endorse the continuation of the Award.

D. Mine clearance and related activities

102. In response to the international landmine crisis, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has continued to exercise its role as the focal point for United Nations mine activities by providing funding, coordination, programme oversight and development of new initiatives, to answer the urgent mine-related humanitarian needs that have emerged worldwide. A comprehensive report on United Nations assistance in mine clearance will be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

103. The United Nations addresses the existing landmine tragedy by actively supporting seven mine-clearance programmes. Over the last year, the United Nations Secretariat has been responsible for programmes in Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Eastern Slavonia, Mozambique and Rwanda, with continuing input into the programmes in Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. In 1995, a one-year programme was completed in Yemen. The United Nations approach to mine-clearance programmes has been, in addition to immediate operational needs, to focus on the creation of indigenous capacities.

104. In fulfilment of its role as a primary advocate for mine victims worldwide, the Department has actively participated in international conferences and continued to work cooperatively with the International Committee of the Red Cross and non-governmental organizations to further the visibility of the landmine issue within the international community. As part of a mine-awareness campaign to further promote the ban on landmines with the general public as well as Governments, the Department has presented a multi-media exhibition on the landmine situation at United Nations offices at Geneva, Vienna and New York. In addition, in late 1995, the Department published the first issue of a quarterly newsletter entitled Landmines to provide information on mine-related activities. The Department, with the support of the Department of Peace-keeping Operations, continues to develop the United Nations Central Landmine Database, which is available on the Internet, so as to ensure the widest dissemination of information collected on mine fields and mine incidents.

V. CONCLUSIONS

105. Humanitarian action is at a crossroads. The escalation of conflicts and displacement has caused a quantum leap in the need for response by the international community. The qualitative changes, in particular the implications of working in volatile and insecure environments, have been a major factor defining how humanitarian organizations conceive of their role and operate on the ground. With these changes has come the realization that complex crises are not aberrations in a linear process of development but have deep roots in or are amplified by the ways in which societies are structured, issues of legitimacy and governance are addressed, and individuals and groups are affected by poverty and disparity. Moreover, the contexts in which humanitarian assistance is provided are often political, and all too frequently constitute the only effective response of the international community when the political will or the resources are lacking to tackle the root causes of crises.

106. The humanitarian enterprise is costly. The humanitarian imperative cannot be denied: the survival needs of individuals and groups affected by emergency and disaster must be addressed. In a world situation characterized by increasing needs and shrinking resources for international assistance, the aid community is faced with difficult choices between silent and high-profile emergencies and between immediate relief and long-term reconstruction and development. Furthermore, while there is general agreement that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, the hard reality of the international system is that minimal resources are available to address the conditions leading to a disaster and long-term solutions.

107. The direction of the enterprise is still in flux. Because of the changing context, new actors, such as the military, have appeared on the humanitarian scene and new types of tasks, such as mine clearance, demobilization and reintegration of soldiers, have to be undertaken. The compartmentalization which typified approaches in the past is giving way to new synergies: key concepts such as "relief", "rehabilitation", "reconstruction" and "development" need continuously to be redefined. In many complex emergencies such distinctions are unhelpful: they tend to overlap and blur the fact that, in protracted crises or low-intensity conflicts, very often it is possible to address both the relief and rehabilitation and, in some instances, development needs at the same time. Indeed, it is now recognized that this is the best way forward: a key to success is to plant development seeds while addressing humanitarian needs.

108. Reform is on the agenda. The process initiated by the Economic and Social Council in 1995 aims to assess and improve the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to crises. Recent studies undertaken by Member States, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions have called for the review of the current institutional arrangements for the delivery and the coordination of humanitarian assistance. The concerned United Nations organizations, as well as their governmental and non-governmental counterparts, are engaged in a dialogue aimed at identifying strains and imbalances in the system, and the corresponding corrections. The approach is essentially incremental and builds on existing capacities.

109. The response capacity of the system is improving. In the four years since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182, considerable experience has been gained in addressing the complex crises of a less predictable world. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Central Emergency Revolving Fund have been significant innovations. Memoranda of understanding and other technical instruments have clarified mandates and improved the interface between a growing number of actors. Several areas of weakness however remain and should be addressed.

110. The first is the area of prevention, preparedness and contingency planning, which is crucial for a timely and effective response to both natural and man-made disasters. Efforts are under way to strengthen United Nations agency guidelines for needs and capacity assessment, as well as for contingency planning. The fact is, however, that resources are more readily available for emergency cure than for prevention. With every major crisis comes the sad recognition that there is no common understanding of what constitutes an acceptable level of contingency planning and of the funds required to attain such a level.

111. The second relates to the ambiguities of the very concept of coordination. There is widespread agreement that coordination is a must, but perceptions may often vary of what it implies in practice, and how it can best be translated into specific coordination mechanisms at the field level. Hence the need to refine the understanding of the system and the international community as a whole of the advantages and disadvantages of specific coordination arrangements.

112. The third pertains to the availability of the necessary resources for the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to carry out its mandated activities. The United Nations is appreciative of the continued support by the donor community directed towards meeting the humanitarian needs in both natural disasters and complex crises. A dialogue has been initiated with Member States, in particular donors, and various more durable approaches have been explored. There is clearly a need to address the vulnerability of the Department resulting from the imbalance between its regular and extrabudgetary resources.

113. The fourth area is accountability which is less than optimal. The proliferation of actors providing assistance in complex emergencies, and the fact that, given the magnitude and diversity of crises, even the most established organizations are greatly over-stretched, have made the task of monitoring, performance assessment and evaluation particularly difficult, but all the more essential. The need for codes of conduct, performance indicators and appropriate mechanisms to assess impact is widely recognized. Initial steps have been taken both within and outside the United Nations system to introduce such mechanisms. Long-term support from Member States, particularly the donor community, is contingent on the humanitarian system's capacity to demonstrate that the funds entrusted to it are spent in a diligent and cost-effective manner. This is however a long-term task requiring dedicated resources for "lessons learned" studies and evaluations. More also needs to be done to equip humanitarian organizations with the means to assess the impact of their activities on the coping mechanisms of the affected communities and to ensure that such activities are sustainable and do not erode self-reliance capabilities.

114. Ultimately, the international community's capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters will depend on how well each part of the system works and how each part, within and outside the United Nations system, works with the other elements. As stated in section III above, the sum must be more than its parts, or the system will never attain the capacity to respond as effectively, efficiently or rapidly as is optimal. This was the rationale behind the process initiated by the Economic and Social Council at its 1995 session. This process is now well under way: the governing bodies of the concerned United Nations organizations and their secretariats, both individually and collectively, have been reviewing the issues raised in the Council resolution. The Council's call for a comprehensive and analytical report, including options, proposals and recommendations for a review and strengthening of all aspects of the capacity of the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance provides a timely opportunity to address some of the most critical issues affecting humanitarian assistance.

115. The humanitarian community is composed of thousands of often young relief workers who have chosen to serve in the remotest and most perilous parts of the world. Whether they work for established United Nations organizations, Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies or international and national non-governmental organizations, with few exceptions, they carry out their duties with competence, dedication to humanitarian values, and a sense of mission. These women and men give their best for the victims of conflict and disaster. They are the greatest asset of the humanitarian community. Their courage in the face of hardship and danger must be acknowledged here. The memory of those who have fallen in the

line of duty, a growing and unacceptable roll-call each year, must not be forgotten.

Notes

1/ United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report, 1995 (New York, Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 16.

2/ See United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, The Least Developed Countries, 1996 Report (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.II.D.3), Overview.

3/ Ibid.

4/ World Bank, World Debt Tables 1994-1995.

5/ Ky Amoako and James Gustave Speth, "In Africa, unattended poverty leads to conflict", International Herald Tribune, 21 March 1996.

6/ See United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, The Least Developed Countries, 1996 Report (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.II.D.3), Overview.

7/ Projections indicate that nearly 50 per cent of the world's population will live in urban environments by the year 2000. United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report, 1995 (New York, Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 185.

8/ Seven least developed countries, the least able to bear the burden, currently host over 250,000 refugees. See Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, The State of the World's Refugees: In Search of Solutions (Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 251.

9/ "The world economy at the beginning of 1996: Note by the Secretary-General" (E/1996/INF/1), para. 25.

10/ See World Food Programme, Tackling Hunger in a World Full of Food: Tasks Ahead for Food Aid (Rome, 1996).

11/ The Working Group on Emergency Telecommunications was formed in order to implement resolution 7 of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (Buenos Aires, 1994) and resolution 36 of the Plenipotentiary Conference of the International Telecommunication Union (Kyoto, 1994).

ANNEX

Central Emergency Revolving Fund

A. Consolidated advances and reimbursements

(As at 31 March 1996)

(United States dollars)

Operational organization	Project	Amount advanced	Amount reimbursed	Amount outstanding	Date of advance	Date of reimbursement
UNICEF	Kenya	2 000 000	2 000 000	0	24 Aug. 1992	31 Dec. 1992 and 22 Oct. 1993
UNICEF	Somalia	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	24 Aug. 1992	22 Dec. 1992
UNCHS	Somalia	500 000	500 000	0	10 Sept. 1992	29 Jan. 1993
FAO	Somalia	1 600 000	1 600 000	0	30 Sept. 1992	24 June 1993
WHO	Somalia	2 000 000	2 000 000	0	26 Oct. 1992	29 March 1993
UNICEF	Iraq	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	11 Nov. 1992	15 April 1993
UNHCR	Afghanistan	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	24 Nov. 1992	6 Jan. 1993
UNICEF	Mozambique	2 000 000	2 000 000	0	22 Jan. 1993	2 Feb. 1994 and 1 Aug. 1994
WFP	Tajikistan	4 500 000	2 036 121	2 463 879	25 March 1993	3 May 1994 and 10 June 1994
WHO	Yugoslavia	2 500 000	2 500 000	0	26 March 1993	5 May 1994
UNHCR	Georgia	2 000 000	2 000 000	0	22 April 1993	16 Sept. 1993
UNICEF	Iraq	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	14 June 1993	21 Oct. 1993
UNHCR	Tajikistan	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	18 June 1993	29 Dec. 1993 and 18 May 1994
WFP	Iraq	4 000 000	4 000 000	0	21 June 1993	3 May 1994 and 9 Aug. 1994
UNICEF	Haiti	1 000 000	1 000 000	0	23 July 1993	25 April 1994 and 1 Aug. 1994
WFP	Lebanon	560 000	560 000	0	3 Sept. 1993	3 Jan. 1994 (FAO)
UNCHS	Lebanon	5 000 000	1 693 276	3 306 724	9 Sept. 1993	21 March 1994 and 17 June 1994
UNICEF	Iraq	7 000 000	7 000 000	0	27 Oct. 1993	1 Feb. 1994
UNHCR	Burundi	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	19 Nov. 1993	1 June 1994
WFP	Burundi	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	22 Dec. 1993	3 May 1994
UNICEF	Angola	1 500 000	1 500 000	0	6 Jan. 1994	19 May 1994
IOM	Zaire	1 000 000	649 846	350 154	6 Jan. 1994	8 July 1994
UNICEF	Sudan	1 000 000	1 000 000	0	17 Feb. 1994	20 June 1994
FAO	Sudan	200 000	200 000	0	23 Feb. 1994	16 May 1994
UNICEF	Yugoslavia	1 000 000	1 000 000	0	16 March 1994	31 Aug. 1994
UNDP	Kenya	500 000	500 000	0	18 March 1994	13 April 1995
WHO	Yugoslavia	2 500 000	2 500 000	0	29 March 1994	31 Oct. 1994
UNICEF	Somalia	4 870 000	4 870 000	0	28 April 1994	22 July 1994 and 24 Oct. 1994

Operational organization	Project	Amount advanced	Amount reimbursed	Amount outstanding	Date of advance	Date of reimbursement
UNREO	Rwanda	200 000	200 000	0	28 April 1994	8 Sept. 1994
UNHCR	Tajikistan	3 000 000	3 000 000	0	20 May 1994	21 Dec. 1994
UNHCR	Rwanda	10 000 000	10 000 000	0	1 June 1994	29 Sept. 1994 and 21 Nov. 1994
UNICEF	Rwanda	3 000 000	3 000 000	0	21 July 1994	30 Dec. 1994
WFP	Rwanda	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	22 July 1994	17 Nov. 1994
HCHR/HR	Rwanda	3 000 000		3 000 000	7 Oct. 1994	
UNICEF	Sudan	3 000 000	3 000 000	0	28 Dec. 1994	24 May 1995 and 22 Nov. 1995
UNICEF	Northern Iraq	930 000	930 000	0	4 Jan. 1995	26 April 1995
UCAH	Angola	480 600	480 600	0	26 Jan. 1995	28 June 1995 and 15 Sept. 1995
WFP	Rwanda	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	7 March 1995	14 July 1995
DHA/UNREO	Rwanda	100 000	100 000	0	13 July 1995	14 March 1996
DHA/UNREO	Rwanda	100 000	100 000	0	1 Aug. 1995	14 March 1996
DHA/SRSG	Burundi	110 000	110 000	0	1 Sept. 1995	11 Jan. 1996
DHA/IRIN	Great Lakes	200 000	100 000	100 000	2 Oct. 1995	29 Jan. 1996
UNAMIR	Rwanda	2 000 000	2 000 000	0	2 Oct. 1995	15 March 1996
DHA	West Africa	1 763 660	157 122	1 606 538	8 Dec. 1995	16 Jan. 1996
Total		120 114 260	109 286 965	10 827 295		

B. Status of utilization of the Fund

Contributions received:	49 227 104
Less: Advances	(120 114 260)
Add: Reimbursements	109 286 965
Add: Interest earned (as at 31 March 1996)	4 567 328
Fund balance as at 31 March 1996	42 967 137